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AN
ESSAY
ON THE
CHARACTER

OF THE LATE
ALEXANDER RUSSEL, M.D. F.R.S.

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Read before the SOCIETY of PHYSICIANS,
the 2d of October, 1769.

L O N D O N :
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A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

A Few years ago it was reported, that the College of Physicians in London had it under consideration to admit persons desirous of practising physic as Licentiates, upon an examination in English.

This was done, as it was supposed, to introduce into this rank men of little or no education, in order to depreciate the characters of many who were in some esteem with the public.

An attempt of this nature could not but alarm those who were immediately to be affected by it, and who felt the designed indignity.

Several of these met together, compared the accounts they had received, and found there was too much truth in the reports, to suffer them any longer to remain inattentive to designs so prejudicial.

It was resolved to call the Licentiates in general together, to acquaint them with their situation, and to act in concert for their general safety.

But

A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

But this was not all ; those who embarked in this affair, had at heart not only the honour of their profession, but its public utility ; not only to emancipate themselves from an authority, which appeared to them in the light of usurpation, but to establish the faculty upon a solid and liberal foundation.

How far their endeavours may succeed, is uncertain. But of one thing they are sure ; they promote harmony amongst themselves, excite to an honourable emulation ; and whatever may be their fate, will give proofs by the rectitude of their conduct ; and an exertion of their abilities, that they are not unworthy of the highest honours in their profession.

Philanthropy is inseparable from good minds. This led them very early to resolve, that honourable mention should be made of their colleagues after their decease. It has fallen to my lot, by appointment of the society, to perform this office. If my abilities had been equal to my friendship for the deceased, or to his desert, the reader would have received much satisfaction in perusing the following pages,

The A U T H O R.

Gentlemen,

WHEN it was first proposed in this Assembly, to preserve the memory of such of our associates, as had deserved well of the public, and thereby done honour to the community of which we are members, I little expected it would have fallen to my lot, so soon to have performed this mournful office for one, who in respect of vigour of constitution, temperance, and just management of his health, was inferior to none, superior to most amongst us.

Accustomed as we are to see the ravages of that hand, which removes the generations of men, strong and weak, rich and poor, the ignorant and the wise, like the herbage that falls promiscuously before the scythe, not one could refrain the unaffected sigh, scarcely the tear, when it was known that our *Russell* was no more ! The tender remembrance of friendship yet lives in every breast ; we mourn without form ; we see and feel the void his fall has left, and which only time can mitigate, and a resignation to the

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dispensations of that Power which orders all things with unerring Wisdom, and Goodness beyond our comprehension.

Unpractised in the language of Eulogy, and unequal to the charge you have committed to me, allow me to bespeak your utmost candour and condescension, and think him not unworthy of your indulgence, who, in obedience to your commands, attempts to place before you, though in an imperfect manner, the idea of the companion you deplore.

We wish to know the most minute particulars in the lives of those, when they are removed, who have become dear to us, either from a similitude of manners, similar studies, a long and mutual intercourse of friendship, or any other of those strong connections that tend to cement individuals together in society. In infancy, almost in the period of youth and adolescence, many traits are often observable, that strongly mark the future character of the man. The relation of incidents, of no consequence in themselves, viewed in this light, affords us satisfaction, when we recollect them as the early presages of future worth: my acquaintance with our colleague having commenced at a later period, prevents any narrative of this kind. I have learned, however, that modesty, diligence, and propriety of conduct, accompanied him from early infancy; beloved by
his

his intimates, esteemed by his friends, feldom making an enemy, never losing a friend, by his own misconduct.

He was early devoted to medicine by his father ;* a person of great eminence as a lawyer in the city of Edinburgh, and singularly happy in having seven of his sons that lived to be men ; not one of whom, by misbehaving, ever gave him cause of a moment's disquietude ; but, on the contrary, by the just reputation they acquired, made all good men rejoice that he had such a family, and so eminently distinguished by so many good qualities.

Our colleague, after having gone through his grammatical studies with reputation in the high school at Edinburgh, and spent two years after this in the University, was placed with his uncle, who was then one of the most eminent practitioners in the city, in order to acquire the knowledge of the first rudiments of medicine. In the years 1732, 3 and 4, he

* The conciseness of the author respecting the character of the Doctor's father, in all probability arose from an apprehension of endangering his own credit, or at least of subjecting himself to the imputation of credulity, had he further enlarged upon it.

For how few would believe, that a most fond indulgent father could, in his own house, manage a very numerous family of children, all boys, and bring up seven of them to man's estate, without ever giving a blow, or even using a harsh expression ; and yet preserved a more perfect obedience in them, than can be produced by any bodily pain ? Such education is liberal in the truest sense of the word.

This worthy man, though he lived to the age of 86, was to the last attended, whenever he pleased (which was almost all day long) with chearful company of both sexes, and of all ages ; retained his faculties and amiable temper, was never angry, and preserved his chearfulness and spirits to the last.

he continued his medical studies under the professors, who at that time so ably filled the several chairs of physic in the University of Edinburgh, and laid the foundation of that character which ranks it in the public esteem superior to most others in Europe.

Though there had long been professorships for medicine in that place, and several attempts had been made to introduce a general course of medical instruction, it was not till about the year 1720, that this university distinguished itself. Several gentlemen, who had studied under Boerhaave, with a view to revive the study of medicine in their native country where it had formerly flourished, qualified themselves for the purpose of giving courses of public lectures on every branch of their profession. The celebrated *Monro* taught anatomy, after having studied it for several years under the ablest masters then in Europe *. The *theory* of physic was assigned to the amiable, the humane *Dr. Sinclair*; *Drs. Rutherford* and *Innes* chose the *practice*; *chemistry* was allotted to *Dr. Plummer*, and the teaching the *materia medica*, together with *botany*, (of which last he was appointed King's professor) devolved upon the learned and indefatigable *Alston*. The city of Edinburgh favoured the generous design, added to the salaries allotted from the crown, and provided as suitable conveniencies as the place would at that time afford.

They

* Dr. Douglass of London, Albinus, the elder, of Leyden, and Winslow at Paris.

They had no sooner opened their respective professorships, than many students of their own nation, some from England, from Ireland, and not long after from the Plantations likewise, flocked thither. This stimulated the professors to exert their great talents with the utmost energy; professor *Monro*'s class soon became numerous; and the anatomy of the bones, of the nerves, and his other pieces, will long remain as testimonies of his great abilities, when the grateful regard of the multitude of those who studied under him, and were witnesses of his singular attention to instruct and encourage his pupils, as well as to act the part of a parent to every stranger, fails of expression. With what grace and elegance, with what minuteness and precision, would the humane, the inimitable *Sinclair* explain the institutes of the master, whose nervous simplicity he studied to exemplify, though not with servile imitation? Where he differed in opinion from that great man, with what diffidence would he offer his own? Ever the student's friend, and their example, in a noble simplicity of manners, and a conduct becoming the gentleman and the physician.

Doctor *Rutherford* still enjoys his country's praise, and the lasting esteem of all his pupils. *Plummer* is no more! He knew chemistry well. Laborious, attentive, and exact. Had not a native diffidence veil'd his talents, as a prælector, he would have been among the foremost in the pupils esteem: Such was the gentleness of his nature; such his universal

knowledge, that in any disputed point of science, the great *Maclaurin* always appealed to him, as to a living library; and yet so great his modesty, that he spoke to young audiences, upon a subject he was perfectly master of, not without hesitation.

Alston, the laborious *Alston*, will live for ages. What benefit his pupils had the means of reaping, will best be known when his Lectures, now in the press, are published †: What care to separate truth from falsehood! how cautious in advancing speculation! how laborious in experiment, and chaste in forming his conclusions! The numerous M. S. copies, that were taken by his pupils of his lectures, are sufficient proofs of their opinion of his abilities.

But while I am thus attempting to pay my tribute of gratitude to the memories of those eminent professors, who laid the foundation of that seminary of physic, whose reputation has since drawn students from every nation in Europe, let me not forget the learned, the able, the laborious *Innes*. Tho' I was not so happy as to be of the number of his pupils, yet I can well remember the deep regret express'd by many of the students, my contemporaries, for his early and untimely fate. Often I have heard them tell, with what dignity with what clearness and precision, in what a nervous masculine stile, he used to explain the Aphorisms of his great master. His colleagues, too, most deeply lamented the
loss

† These Lectures are since published.

loss which they and the public sustained by the death of so able a coadjutor ; they regretted the Man whom they loved, the Physician and Professor whom they esteemed.

Under such masters, and at a time when they were daily rising into reputation, Dr. Russel studied, embracing every means of qualifying himself for the duties of his station.

Several students at that time, the foremost in application and in knowledge, fired by the example of their masters, who had nothing more at heart than the improvement of those who committed themselves to their tuition, formed a Society for their mutual instruction and advancement in their studies. Every student of a certain standing, who distinguished himself by his diligence, capacity, and conduct, was initiated into this little assembly. Here the opinions of the Antients, of their Contemporaries, nay the Doctrines of their Masters, were frequently discussed ; and two of the members were always charged with the task of providing instruction and entertainment for the next meeting of the Society. Questions, no doubt, were here disputed and decided, which long experience would have declined. But it exercised their faculties, gave them both sides of arguments, taught them to doubt, and habituated them to observation.

Our colleague was one of the first members of this association, instituted in the autumn of the year 1734, together with

with the eminent Doctor Cuming of Dorchester, the sagacious Cleghorn, lecturer in anatomy at Dublin, with a few others, who, though now removed, did honour in their stations to this institution, which not only subsists, but has yearly encreased in vigour, and is honoured with the immediate patronage of the Professors. In a Thesis, not long since dedicated to this Society by a very ingenious member ‡, as well as from the testimony of another gentleman, who had been admitted into it, the singular advantages that result from this association, are described in a manner that delineates the character of

‡ Dr. Morgan of Philadelphia dedicates his Thesis, published when he took his degree in the year 1763.

“ Societati Medicinæ Studioforum in Academia Edinburgena dudum institutæ :”

In which he bestows, among others, the following panegyrick. “ Quippe qui recolam
“ quanto cum judicio, ordine et decore res vestræ gerantur ; quanta sint in vestris ratioci-
“ niis et sententiis, tum libertas et candor, tum etiam nam expertus refero, æquus et hu-
“ manus favor, ita ut saluberrimo hoc vestro instituto, quo non nisi utilissimæ quæstiones
“ discutuntur, omnia conspirant ad scientiæ medicæ studium cum fructu et emolumento pro-
“ movendum,” &c.

In Dr. Garland’s Inaugural Dissertation, “ De medicamentis adstringentibus,” published also in 1763, is the following account of it.

“ Nec juvenum coetus qui medicinæ ratione excolendæ causâ, septimo quoque die, inter
“ se in nosocomio regio conveniunt, ac quorum ego in numero per triennii spatium fui,
“ decessurus, non mentionem non facere potui.—Celeberrimis academix scholis, hæc quasi
“ alia succedit.—Is certe locus est, ubi audita a doctoribus, e libris petita, undecunque ac-
“ cepta ad medicinam pertinens disciplina, in medium prolata, ac ultro, citroque in con-
“ trarias partes disputando agitata, altius in omnium animos influit : ubi juventutis studia glo-
“ ria incenduntur, exercitatione acuuntur, animique ad multiplicis ac spinosæ scientiæ quærendæ
“ laborem perferendum, propositis ex suorum numero exemplis pulcherrimis, perpelluntur,
“ postremo, ubi omnes inter se mutux amicitix firmissimum nectit vinculum. *Floruit tri-
“ ginta prope annos* his juvenilis circulus, et ut æternum floreat precor !”

Soon after its first institution, the writer of this Memorial was likewise a member, and knows from experience the benefits resulting from it.

of the students in that university, and does honour to the first founders of the institution.

Having finished his studies in the university, though without applying for a degree at that time, he came to this city in the year 1735, and soon after went to Turkey, and settled about the year 1740 at Aleppo, in the practice of physic.

The English Factory at that place has frequently been constituted of men of property and extensive knowledge; they were such when Doctor Russell fixed there, at the unanimous request of the gentlemen of the Factory. We have no account of any of his predecessors being remarkably eminent in the practice of physic: To take care of the Factory seems to have been the extent of their views.

Doctor Russell applied himself assiduously to gain a knowledge of the Language of the country, and to become acquainted with the ablest of the numerous practitioners in the place, who were employed among the inhabitants. He succeeded in both: He soon discovered the incapacity of these; a few traditional receipts composed the whole furniture of most of them; he found a few, however, capable of information, and assisted them to the utmost of his power.

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He was soon applied to by the inhabitants of Aleppo, of all ranks and professions; Franks, Greeks, Armenians, Maronites, Jews, &c. and even by the Turks themselves: In this instance they forgot that he was an unbeliever, remitted of their usual contempt for strangers, and not only beheld him with respect, but courted his friendship, and placed unlimited confidence in his opinion. The Pascha himself became acquainted with the merit of our deceased colleague, consulted him, called him his Friend, found him upright, sensible, and sincere; as a man, polite without flattery, decent, but not servile; as a christian, true to his principles, disinterested and generous as a Briton; and in point of skill as a physician, superior to every one. A natural, even, cool and consistent temper, a freedom of behaviour as remote from confidence as constraint, improved by reading and conversation; a mind imbued with just reverence to God, and impressed with a sense of the duty we owe; an understanding fraught with the principles of the profession to which he had been early devoted (the practice of physic) happily blended with great benevolence, was a character seldom to be met with in the Asiatick regions: This, however, was the character of our colleague; and I appeal to you, my associates, for the justice of the portrait.

The Factory thought themselves happy in such a physician, such a companion, such a countryman. His close and intimate

intimate connexion with the Pascha, enabled him to render to the Factory the most important services; and indeed all the European nations trading at that place, were repeatedly obliged to his interposition, on a multitude of occasions.

Seldom would the Pascha determine any intricate affair, respecting not only commerce, but even the interior Police of his government, without first consulting his Physician and his Friend; and as seldom deviated from the opinion he proposed: And such was the Pascha's respect for so rare a character, and such his friendship and determined resolution to do him honour, that he even chose to oblige the People in the Doctor's Presence, and seldom punished any criminal but in the Doctor's Absence; that the people might learn to think it was owing to the Doctor's Interposition, that examples of severity were not more frequently inflicted. ‡

Many

‡ With regard to criminals, this behaviour of the Pascha was very remarkable and polite; for when mitigating circumstances occurred in favour of criminals, to induce the Pascha to spare them, he often dismissed them, with a caution to behave better in time to come; for they were so bad, that none of their own countrymen durst speak to them; but that they owed their lives to the English Doctor: Though he sometimes before had retired, to make way for the necessary severities of justice, and knew nothing of the matter till the poor unhappy wretches came to his house, to fling themselves at his feet, and with true gratitude thank him for their lives: And indeed sometimes the Pascha went so far as to tell the criminals, that, in his opinion, they certainly deserved Death, but that he durst not order it, for the English Doctor insisted on Mercy. It is rare to find any ruler making so great a sacrifice

Many princely presents were the consequence of this esteem : The Pascha did not even forget the Doctor's Father, *to whom*, said he, *I am obliged for your assistance*. He ordered presents to be sent to the worthy old man : What joy must this excite in an aged parent's heart, to have such authentic proofs of the merit of his son from so distant a clime, and where the merit must be great to gain such a testimony ! ---I leave the HISTORY OF ALEPPO to speak its author's abilities.---It has been already translated into other languages, and it will be justly esteemed one of the most important productions in medicine, should ever that fatal scourge, the Plague, be permitted to come amongst us.

You, gentlemen, are not ignorant of its worth ; and to say more on this subject, would be detracting as much from your understandings, as from your friendship.

Suffer

crifice of his popularity to a Stranger, or in so polite a manner to transfer it to any body.— Besides this Pascha, who ruled a long time, the others that came after him had the greatest confidence in the Doctor, and intimacy with him ; particularly one Pascha of this place, an old man, who had ruled the Empire as Grand Vizir, and died at Aleppo, intrusted him with the whole secrets of his family, and depended on his advice.

The Doctor's fame was perhaps more general over the Turkish Empire, than any physician's is in Europe ; well known at court, and in every province, he escaped more than once the disagreeable circumstance of being sent for to the Grand Signor in time of the Plague. His brother was, in most of the trading towns in Turkey, found out, by bearing the same name, and offered great civilities ; and once at Constantinople, when a slight Plague happened there, was oppressed with invitations to visit several great men, which with difficulty he avoided. W. R.

Suffer me, however, to recount one circumstance, which may not perhaps be of such general notoriety.

From his thorough knowledge of the Pestilence, and the means successfully made use of to prevent infection, in the countries most exposed to this fatal disease, he formed a design of exciting the greatest commercial nation in the world to provide some more effectual means than hitherto it had done, in order to prevent it from again becoming the dreadful theatre of pestilential contagion.---With this view, in his return from Turkey, he visited the most famous Lazarettos, to which he could have access, inquired into their structure, the government they were under, and took an account of all the precautions they used for preservation.

At Naples, Leghorn, and other places, he had all the opportunities of observation he could wish for; and profited by them to such a degree, as to be better acquainted with the conduct of the wisest states, in respect to the means of prevention, than perhaps any other person: Indeed his acquaintance with this subject, and his experience, induced him to make himself master of every thing appertaining to preservation from one of the greatest of all human calamities.

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And so generally was his great knowledge of this distemper established, that in the latter end of the year 1757, when our ministry was alarmed with a report of its being broke out at Lisbon, and earnestly solicitous to take every precaution to prevent its being imported into this kingdom, they thought no person so fit to be consulted on the means proper to be pursued, as our worthy colleague. Doctor Russell received his orders to attend the Privy Council; he came, and gave such pertinent and satisfactory answers to the questions proposed, that he was desired to communicate his information, and the method he proposed to prevent the spreading of that calamity in writing. This he accordingly did; and should it please the Almighty hereafter to threaten this nation with that dreadful scourge, the prosecution of the plans then suggested, may perhaps greatly contribute to avert from us the most terrible of all diseases.

From the time he left England, to his return in February 1755, we had maintained a regular correspondence. I could not forbear mentioning to him repeatedly, how acceptable a more accurate account of Aleppo would be to this nation, and to all Europe; that no person would probably ever stand a chance of succeeding in it so happily as himself; that his long residence there, his knowledge of the language, the manners, customs, diseases of the place, the great credit

dit he had acquired amongst all ranks, by an able, diligent, and disinterested exertion of his faculties amongst them, his influence over the Pascha, and the respect paid him by the Turks themselves, would facilitate every enquiry : He viewed the proposal in the same light, collected materials, made suitable enquiries, and has erected a lasting and honourable monument to his memory.

With no small trouble he succeeded in procuring us the seeds of the *true scammony*. They were raised by my two botanical friends, the late Peter Collinson, and the indefatigable James Gordon : Seeds were likewise sent over to the southern colonies of America, in hopes that in a similar soil and latitude, in some future time, we might from thence have this valuable drug unadulterated.†

To

† The late Consul Sherrard, who resided long at Aleppo, and was one of the most eminent botanists of his time, endeavoured long and fruitlessly to obtain the seeds of this and some other curious plants. The Arabs, who are the people chiefly employed in these affairs, not so much through ignorance as knavishness, will bring every kind of seed but the right, and assert that it is the seed required. Dr. Russel assured me, that he had near 20 different seeds brought to him for the seeds of the true Scammony, by different persons employed to procure it him, with promises of a suitable reward. Amongst these found, there were two parcels of seeds alike, which corresponding to the general character, he judged were the right ; and these he sent over to England. Many plants were raised from them, and some are yet in the gardens of a few botanists in the neighbourhood of London. We have not received an account of their propagation in America ; but if the plant is kept alive in this country, it will probably be sent thither, under some person more attentive to the public benefit, than his predecessors.

Dr. Russel published an exact description of the Scammony, and the method of collecting its juice, in the first volume of the Medical Observations.

To him, likewise, we are indebted for a plant, that will hereafter be one of the greatest ornaments of our gardens ; ‡ as well as for many useful intimations, both in respect to his own profession, as to commerce in general.

He chose this city for his residence at his return to England, and soon had a considerable share of employment. A vacancy happening in St. Thomas's Hospital, about the beginning of the year 1759, he was chosen physician, and continued in this station to the time of his death, an example of diligence and humanity to the sick, of great medical abilities as a physician, and as a gentleman irreproachable : The Royal Society, of which he was many years a worthy member, the Medical Society, † likewise, who early admitted him amongst them, are obliged to Dr. Ruffell, and the public through them, for many valuable communications : His extensive practice at Aleppo, his early introduction into business here, after his arrival, the multitude of objects under

‡ The *Andrachne*, nearly approaching to the *Arbutus*, which it surpasses in elegance. An exact description of this plant was given in the Transactions, by that great botanist and excellent painter, the late G. D. Ehret.

† *Medical Society*. About the year 1752, several physicians in London, chiefly of those called Licentiates, agreed to form themselves into a society, for collecting and publishing all such observations and enquiries in medicine, that seemed to deserve the public notice. This society has subsisted ever since, has published several volumes, which have been well received, and will be followed by others.

der his care in the hospital, supplied a fund of medical experience, which might have yielded much benefit to society, had his life been protracted.

Need I recite how much this Society is indebted to his vigilance and activity? Perhaps it is in a great measure owing to him that it exists.

Conscious of an uniform endeavour to promote the happiness of all to the utmost of his abilities in every station of life; accustomed to be treated with a degree of respect, which talents like his, so uniformly exerted in the promotion of every thing paise worthy, had a right to expect, he could not easily brook the superciliousness of men, who were weak enough to suppose, that neither sense nor learning, skill nor experience, were the produce of any other clime than that within the narrow limits of which they themselves had been confined.

Impatient of indignities he had not deserved, and satisfied that yet greater were intended to others in a like situation with himself, with a view to erect a reputation upon other mens' foundations, he communicated his sentiments to others, who had the like apprehensions; and common danger has happily been the means of cementing a permanent reciprocal

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regard, and forming a regular Society of Men, scarce known to each other but by name, but whose views are alike, Self-preservation, and whose talents for promoting the honour of the art they profess, and the benefit of their fellow citizens, have acquired signal marks of royal and public approbation.

If then to him, with very few coadjutors, is owing the existence of this Society ; if the establishment of it has contributed to secure no small part of the faculty of physic in this city from injury and oppression ; if it should be the means of establishing the whole on a just and liberal foundation ; if by it harmony and good intelligence have been promoted among individuals, whose duty and interest, now their inclination likewise, leads them to be united ; our grateful acknowledgements are most certainly due to that man, who laboured most assiduously to promote these advantages ; and to his memory let us pay a grateful tribute for his unwearied endeavours to serve the community, and the important services he rendered it to the latest period of his life.

For my own part, when I recollect what I have lost in him, the sensible, firm, and upright friend, the able, honest, and experienced physician, the pleasing instructive companion of a social hour, expression fails me.

Should

Should this account ever pass beyond the circle of Dr. Russell's personal acquaintance, perhaps it would be to them some gratification to know, that he was in respect of stature rather tall than middling, well made, of a fresh sanguine complexion, grave in his deportment, chearful in conversation, active in the business of his profession, and sagacious ; an attentive and diligent observer, clear in his intentions, manly in his prescriptions, and in his conduct to the sick, benevolent and discreet.

Animated by his example, let us pursue the arduous track of public virtue, and having, like him, supported the dignity of our profession, by dealing with a liberal hand to all, the blessings of health, to the utmost of our abilities, and done honour to our species, by the constant exercise of uprightness, candour, and benignity, we may close the scene, in full possession of all that deserves the name of human felicity.

F I N I S.



Should this account ever pass before the eyes of
the public, a personal acquaintance, perhaps it would be
to them some gratification to know, that he was a witness
of nature's tall than middling, well made, of a high
anguine complexion, gay in his deportment, cheerful in
conversation, active in the pursuit of his profession, and a
generous; an attentive and diligent observer, clear in his in-
terviews, ready in his propositions, and in his conduct to
the free, benevolent and discreet.

Animated by his example, let us pursue the arduous track
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